A SHORT HISTORY OF ISLAM

S.F. MAHMUD

To
the memory of
My Daughter
NASREEN

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PREFACE

A Short History of Islam has many aspects. It has been steady as well as stormy, full of disasters as well as astonishing recoveries. It rose out of a semi-barbarous land and touched the heights of intellectual and spiritual glory in a wide world. A rabble, a horde, an unruly and fiercely clannish people welded into an irresistible force by faith, by spiritual pride and moral fervour, by the Word of God and the inspiring leadership and example of a remarkable man, went out of sandy wastes and peopled three continents. The Ummah (the Muslim Community) composed of Arabs, Persians, Berbers, Turks, Indians, Whites and Blacks, beaten now and then, but never completely vanquished, rose in one region or another of the globe and kept alive the light of knowledge, they had garnered from everywhere and never ceased to proclaim that Man has the capacity to reach the stars if he develops his powers. It produced a social order in which slaves became Sultans and were accepted as rulers by others.

It sank and became nearly extinct after 1918, yet its inner vitality remained glowing deep inside it, and today Islam may not be a world-wide force, as it once was, but it is again alive and is making itself felt in world affairs. And this is what has amazed the people of the western world.

Take a look at the explosive beginnings of Islam. By the time the Prophet died (A.D. 632) Islam had taken a firm hold on the Arabian peninsula. But in an astonishingly short time, the volunteer armies of Islam, composed as time went of multitudes of neo-Muslims, conquered Palestine and Syria by 640, Iraq by 641, Egypt by 642, Tripolitania (now Libya) by 647, Persia by 650 and Afghanistan by 661. Tunisia surrendered in 693. Algeria and Morocco were in Arab hands by 705. Sind and Lower Punjab were conquered in 712 and so was Spain. By 732 the advance had reached the middle of France, where it was checked at Tours.

This meant that the *Azan* (the Call to Prayer) was being chanted in Arabic from the shores of Atlantic to the borders of China in the very first century of Islam (A.D. 622-722). And what is marvellous, it is still being called from Indonesia to Senegal and from Sinkiang to Sudan, even though the Central Asian Muslim States are submerged in the Russian cosmos and their voice is mute. What is more, over a million sons of Islam gather at Mecca every year to perform together the Hajj, coming as they do from all corners of the globe.

During all the vicissitudes of time, there have been many catastrophes for Islam. Remember the devastating march of the Tartar hordes in the 13th century and the overwhelming western tide after the eighteenth century. Western domination was slow but it was more insidious. Whereas the Mongols soon accepted Islam and adopted Islamic institutions and their offsprings, the Turks dominated the Mediterranean world for three centuries and were still a force in the eighteenth century, the West remained inimical to Islam to the end. Whereas another, short of the terrible Tartars, the Moghuls, achieved a glory of their own for over two centuries in the Indo-Pak sub-continent and even the British could not smother the aura of Moghul fame, as the cultural supremacy of the Moghuls remained undimmed for another hundred years.

But from nineteenth century onwards, western civilization struck at the Islamic spiritual, cultural, and intellectual roots everywhere and undermined them. Coupled with political domination and scientific progress came their industrial development and commercial exploitation of the subjugated people. The technological advances made by the West and the applied uses of their inventions revolutionized and changed living conditions everywhere, and gave a sense of inferiority to all Eastern people, as to Muslims whether in Africa or Asia.

Yet Islam appears to have survived. It has begun to breathe. The Muslims everywhere are learning the new ways of life without abandoning their own cultural past. An effort is being made to strike a balance between the two opposite (if not antagonistic) spiritual systems, two distinct behaviour patterns, and two almost contrary basic values. The effects of the progress made by western mechanical advancements and technological achievements (even ushering the Atomic Age) which dazzled and even stunned the East, including of course the Muslim World, is wearing off. If Japan, Korea, Taiwan and now China can successfully compete with the West in ingenuity and skill, so can other Eastern people. Consequently the worshipful attitude of most of the newly independent Muslim people is gone and it is being frankly admitted and said that we must move with the times. We must give a new look to our outworn ways of thought and our petrified attitudes of life, without losing the basic values which distinguish us from the West. It has been proved that mere copying of the Western mores would warp one's soul and destroy one's identity. The price to be paid for meretricious progress would be very heavy if not disastrous.

This conscious and deliberate effort of the Islamic World to first, combat the rank secular outlook of the Great Powers (as Iran is doing) and secondly, refuse to be overwhelmed by the power and pelf of the donors of AID, whether economic or military is a good sign. It is a sign of vigour; it is an expression of a vital psyche which has astonished the world. We have begun to realize that AID binds, whatever be its form and we should accept it with care. The world which had finished with the followers of the Prophet of Allah after World War I is seriously pondering over this phenomenal renaissance.

It is true that what we have achieved, in spite of the resolutions of our Islamic Conference, is not yet remarkable, but the work of regeneration has begun, the determination is there and the struggle to attain an honourable place under the sun is on. A few years, even a few decades, are but a moment in the life of nations.

3 May 1987

S.F. Mahmud

CHAPTER I

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

Arabia. Arabia is the cradle of Islam: the Prophet of Islam was born there; he spoke in Arabic, a language of which the Arabs were very proud and in which they had great gifts of expression and his message was delivered to the Arabs, who spread his teaching everywhere. It is necessary, therefore, to study the country of the Arabs as well as their customs, habits, and their pre-Islamic way of life, in order to understand the effect of the Prophet on them and, through them, on others. The Arabs belonged to a country which was very nearly cut off from the ancient civilized world; a desert encloses the north, and seas border three sides of it; to the north-east flows the Euphrates and in the north-west lies the Mediterranean. The Arabs called it an island—Jazirat-ul-Arab. The Arabs, a branch of the Semitic race, are a very ancient people who have had their own way of life for countless ages and who have been proud of this, and of their birth and origin, their land and its customs. Most of Arabia is a desert, but here and there are valleys in which are pastures for the bedouin, the wandering natives of Arabia. There are also oases, green spots in a wilderness of sands, and even mountains where there is considerable rainfall. Such a place is the Yemen, with which we begin the story of Arabia.

Yemen. The Yemen is a highland country and has a favourable climate. It has its share of rain and its winters are cold. Wheat, millet, and barley are grown in the wide green valleys. On the slopes of its hills are gardens of grapes, figs, apricots, pomegranates, and walnuts; also the famous Mocha coffee, for which the Yemen has been famous throughout the ages, is grown there. Some cattle are kept, too. San'a is the capital. The Yemen has always been the richest part of Arabia, and it is known that in very ancient times it had a well-developed civilization of its own. The Yemen was called Himyar in the days before Islam, and used to trade with the Roman world many centuries before the Prophet was born.

Hadramaut. To the east of the Yemen lay Hadramaut, which was a coastal land. It, too, had historic connections, and must have been a prosperous land, because in its valleys are ruins of ancient cities and canals. The famous frankincense tree, whose gum yielded a perfume which was highly prized in the ancient world, grew in Hadramaut, and the district was mentioned by Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, writing in the fifth century before Christ. The people were hardy. They grew vegetables, fruits, millet, and barley in the valleys; nowadays they also grow tobacco. They gathered honey, and the bedouin raised flocks. The people loved the sea and traded with the East and the Far East since very ancient times. They went out and settled in East Africa, on the western coast of India, and in Sumatra.

Nejd. Nejd is the raised tableland in the centre of Arabia. To the south and north of it lie two entirely barren areas; in the south is the desert called *Rub al-Khali*—the empty quarter, and in the north is the Nufud desert. Nejd itself is a healthy land, the climate being dry, but invigorating. It has always been famous for its brave tribesmen and its noble horses. It gave birth to a Puritan movement in the eighteenth century under Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahhab. Nejd is now the centre of much activity connected with the production of oil. The entire country except for the Yemen, Hadramaut, and the south-eastern coastal belt, is now called Saudi Arabia.

Hijaz. We come now to al-Hijaz, the most important part of the Arabian peninsula. It lies to the north of the Yemen and to the west of Nejd, and is the most barren of the places we have discussed. It has not the pleasant climate and greenery of Yemen, the comparatively good soil of Hadramaut, the oil wealth of al-Hasa and the eastern regions bordering on the Persian Gulf, or the vigorous climate and the oil deposits of Nejd. Al-Hijaz has its oases, gardens, and orchards at Medina and Taif, but it is in every other way the poorest part of Arabia; and yet it is the most important of all the Arab provinces. It contains the two holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina. Even before the coming of Islam Mecca was a holy place, and people from all over Arabia came there on pilgrimage.

Arab Life. Although Arabia contains such widely varied districts, the life of the Arabs was organized in the same way everywhere. They could not build big cities as there was not enough wealth in the land, nor were there enough people. They lived in small groups, held together by the bonds of the family. A few families, presumably the descendants of a common ancestor, joined to form a clan; a few clans of the same origin made a tribe. Every Arab was a member of a family, a clan, and a tribe. They lived together, fought together, sorrowed together, and triumphed together. As there was never enough to eat, neither food for man nor fodder for beast, life was uncertain and dangerous, and tempers were never very cool. At any time, a clan might be raided by neighbours. There was adventure in these raids as well as gain: there was fighting in them too. The Arab fought as often as he could to test his arm, his sword, and his horse. A feud was never a single man's concern; once a member of another clan or tribe had been killed in open fight, in a raid, or even in an ambush, then the whole clan was involved in it for a long time; it might even last for a generation with many people dying on either side, because death had to be avenged. The Arab held life cheap; death was unimportant, so long as he died fighting for his honour. And yet he loved to quote verses, listen to and honour the poets, enjoy poetic contests and hang the winner's verses on the walls of the Kaaba.

Arab Migrations. The Arabs lived in this way for countless generations. Many of them who tired of the sameness and barrenness of their desert home went to the north; for there lay green valleys and broad rivers, and life could be comfortable for a man, even though he had to fight to gain a place for himself. So waves of Arabs went forth to the north-east and the north-west, to Iraq, the land of the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, and to Syria and Palestine and their green hills and fertile valleys. It is believed that the ancient Akkadians, Chaldeans, Sumerians, and Assyrians who flourished in Iraq long ago came from the desert. In the same way the Phoenicians, the Aramaeans, the Amorites, and the Hebrews who went to Palestine had also been Arabs. Only a century before the birth of Islam an Arab tribe, the Ghassanids or the Bani Ghassan, had gone to Palestine, been converted to Christianity, and had settled in what is now southern Jordan.

Arab Neighbours. Beyond Syria in the north-west and Iraq in the north-east lay two mighty empires: the Byzantine Empire, which was a Christian power, lay to the north-west, and the Persian Empire, called also the Sassanid Empire, lay to the north-east. The Persians believed in Zoroaster, and were mostly Zoroastrians. Both these powers were old civilizations, both were very proud. They rated the Arabs low and called them barbarians; they had little traffic with them except for trade, and even then they did not make friends with them. But these Byzantines and Persians did not like each other either. For a century before Islam they had been fighting with each other; sometimes the Persian Chosroes, as the Persian 'king of kings' was called, had the upper hand and sometimes the Byzantine Emperor. A lot of damage was caused, particularly to trade, since the over-land trade routes to the Far East and to India and China, which passed through Persia, were broken.

The New Trade Route. A different trade route, therefore, had to be discovered, and one was discovered, though it was not very direct, nor was it very new. Part of it was by sea and part by land. The ships from the East came to the Yemen port of Aden in the south where they discharged their cargoes; from there the goods were taken by camel caravans up the coast to Mecca. From Mecca other caravans set out with these goods, as well as the products of Arabia, dates and honey, camel-hair matting, tents, and frankincense. The caravans went to Yathrib, later called Medina, and after a halt and the addition of other goods, continued up al-Hijaz, until they reached the markets and big trade centres of Syria, Damascus, and Aleppo, or the ports of Palestine. This route served the Arabs well. It brought a lot of people to Mecca, and much money changed hands. In the course of centuries Mecca became an important trade depot. Its citizens began to engage in commerce themselves. They went with their caravans to Palestine and Syria, and saw new lands. Mecca and Yathrib were no longer cut off, they became important links in the trade between East and West. Many families in Mecca grew rich. Since money brings prestige to those who hold it and even great prominence if they belong to a respectable or notable family, the tribe which gradually won all this prominence became important in Mecca. This tribe was called the Quraish.

The Quraish. The Bani Quraish claimed to be descended from the Prophet Abraham through his elder son Ismail (Ishmael). In the fifth century, one prominent member of the tribe called Abd Manaf had two sons, Hashim and Abd Shams. Abd Shams was a quiet unassuming man, but his son Omayyah was a very assertive person. He became a rival of his uncle Hashim in duties relating to the care and maintenance of the Kaaba, the sacred shrine of the Arabs. It was not long before the families of these two grew into clans. They were called Bani Hashim and Bani Omayyah. The Bani Omayyah took to commerce and, taking advantage of the trade route through Hijaz, became quite prominent leaders of the commercial group. The Bani Hashim leaned either towards piety or towards the manly sports of hunting, archery, or swordsmanship. Members of this clan also engaged in trade, but not to the same extent as the Bani Omayyah.

Abu Sufyan and Abdul Muttalib. In the middle of the sixth century the leader of the Bani Omayyah was Abu Sufyan, grandson of Omayyah. He was a prominent Meccan, an astute old man, wise, and shrewd in his judgement. The chief of the Bani Hashim was Abdul Muttalib, who had certain important duties relating to the Kaaba. He was respected by all, but in worldly ways and political importance he was not on the same footing as Abu Sufyan. Since all social laws in Arabia were based on tribal customs, the same system prevailed in Mecca. In a clan or a tribe, the headman was a senior member who was a wise leader and a shrewd organizer, and who decided the affairs of the clan or tribe with the assistance of the elders of the tribe. So it was in Mecca, where there was a Council of Elders and a headman. The headman was chosen here as elsewhere, not only for his birth, but also for his qualities, his experience, his seniority, his prestige, and his wisdom. The headman in Mecca was Abu Sufyan.

The Sons of Abu Sufyan and Abdul Muttalib. Abu Sufyan was wise in the ways of the world. He had grown in business and had been many times to Palestine and Syria with his caravans. He had a son called Muawiyah, an able, sober young man, whom he generally took with him. Muawiyah could read and write; he had also learnt to deal with men, and had considerable native shrewdness. Abdul Muttalib had many sons, but the best known of these were Hamza, Abu Talib, and Abbas. Hamza was a great hunter and a mighty warrior. Abu Talib and Abbas were sober men of affairs with good judgement and cool heads. There were two other sons, Abu Lahab and Abdullah. Abu Lahab was an obstinate man of limited intelligence who was mean and revengeful: Abdullah was the youngest son. He was married in 570 while still a young man to Amina, the daughter of Wahb bin Abdalla, a lady of rank. He did not live long, however: he died while on a journey, and soon after his death his wife bore a son, who was named Muhammad.

Early Life of Muhammad (b. 570). Muhammad's mother died soon after his birth. He was then taken care of by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. When he was six years old, his grandfather also died. His uncle, Abu Talib, now undertook his care and Muhammad grew up in his house. Little is known of his boyhood, but it is told that as a boy he tended flocks like most Arab boys, though he never played any wild pranks as most boys do. He was quiet and given to thinking even when young. He observed things keenly and tried to understand people around him. He had to learn tact early, because he was an orphan. He tried to make peace between fighting groups of boys, and since he never took part in these clashes and always gave a just opinion when a matter was referred to him, boys began to defer to his judgement. This reputation stayed with him when he grew up. People found that they could trust him; he would stand by what he said. He was always ready to help with word or deed, and he never failed anybody who depended on him. They began to call him *al-Amin*—the trusted one.

Muhammad's Youth. His uncle Abu Talib would sometimes take young Muhammad with him to Palestine and Syria, for he could be trusted with the accounts; he was observant by nature and could give good advice. It did not matter if Muhammad also observed the life of people in that land and listened to their preachers. His uncle knew that Muhammad was a thoughtful young man; when he asked questions, he turned the answers over in his mind. He was interested in what people believed. His grandfather had been the Keeper of the Kaaba and the boy had been in and out of the holy shrine a thousand times. He had looked at people bowing before stones and statues of gods and goddesses. There was a moon-goddess in whom the majority of the Arabs believed called Al-lat. There were two other goddesses called Manat and Uza, and also a god called Hubal, and many more. He had never understood what people found in worshipping these stones or statues, and in believing in so many gods. The Jews and the Christians had their own faiths, but he had found the Jews very rigid and their God stern; they had peculiar rituals and were very intolerant. The Christians believed in a gentler God, but their Prophet was not supposed to be a man at all. He was called the Son of God; the Christians believed him to be God made flesh. Muhammad could not understand how that could be. There was a vague notion among some Arabs that there was one God above all, but nobody seemed to know who or what this meant. Some called him Allah.

Muhammad Marries Khadijah. When Muhammad was about twenty-five years old, he came into the service of a rich Meccan lady of the tribe of Quraish called Khadijah, who was his senior by a few years. He conducted her affairs so well that he soon became her steward, then her manager. She was so taken by his honesty, his industry, and his charm of manner, that she offered him her hand in marriage. Muhammad had never been romantic; unlike other young men, women had mattered little to him so far. Khadijah was certainly older than he, but she had a noble character and she was also very understanding. They were fond of each other, so he consented and they were married.

Years of Contemplation. Muhammad was now free from economic worries. He still managed his wife's business, but he had much more leisure to do what he had always wanted to do: to think, and to get at the root of all these religions and their peculiar practices. Why was man led to worship stones? People believed in evil spirits, he knew, and some even believed in the spirits of trees. What did they find in such beliefs? Obviously man wanted to believe in something, that must be the reason why he could believe in any thing. He wanted to understand the 'why' and 'wherefore' of things and he wanted to belong. But a belief was supposed to explain the mystery of life and death, of the heavens and all they contained, the problem of evil, of punishment, and reward. Naturally different people believed in different solutions to this mystery. Where did the truth lie?

Muhammad thought deeply about it all. He talked to others, seeking wisdom from them, but nobody could satisfy him. He would then go out of town and seek a lonely spot where he could think undisturbed. One such spot he found in a cave called Hira, in a hill outside the town, and it became his favourite haunt. He sat there for hours on end and so the years slipped by.

The Revelation (611). One day, when he was forty years old, he was sitting, in a trance, inside this quiet cave when he heard a voice, which seemed to come from nowhere. It called out, 'Muhammad! Muhammad! Muhammad!' It then said, 'Behold! thou art chosen as a Prophet of God.' The sound echoed in the cave for some time and Muhammad seemed to hear the words again and again. He could not understand it all, and doubted his senses. He was even frightened. But when a few days later he heard the same voice and with it came a vision of light which seemed to fill the horizon from end to end, he was even more astonished. This vision now told him that it was the Archangel Gabriel himself who had come as a messenger of Allah to His chosen Prophet, Muhammad. He then asked him to read. Now Muhammad was a man of extraordinary talents, but he could not read or write. He was, therefore, bewildered. But the Archangel asked him to repeat after him: 'Read in the name of Allah, thy Creator . . .' The vision then faded.

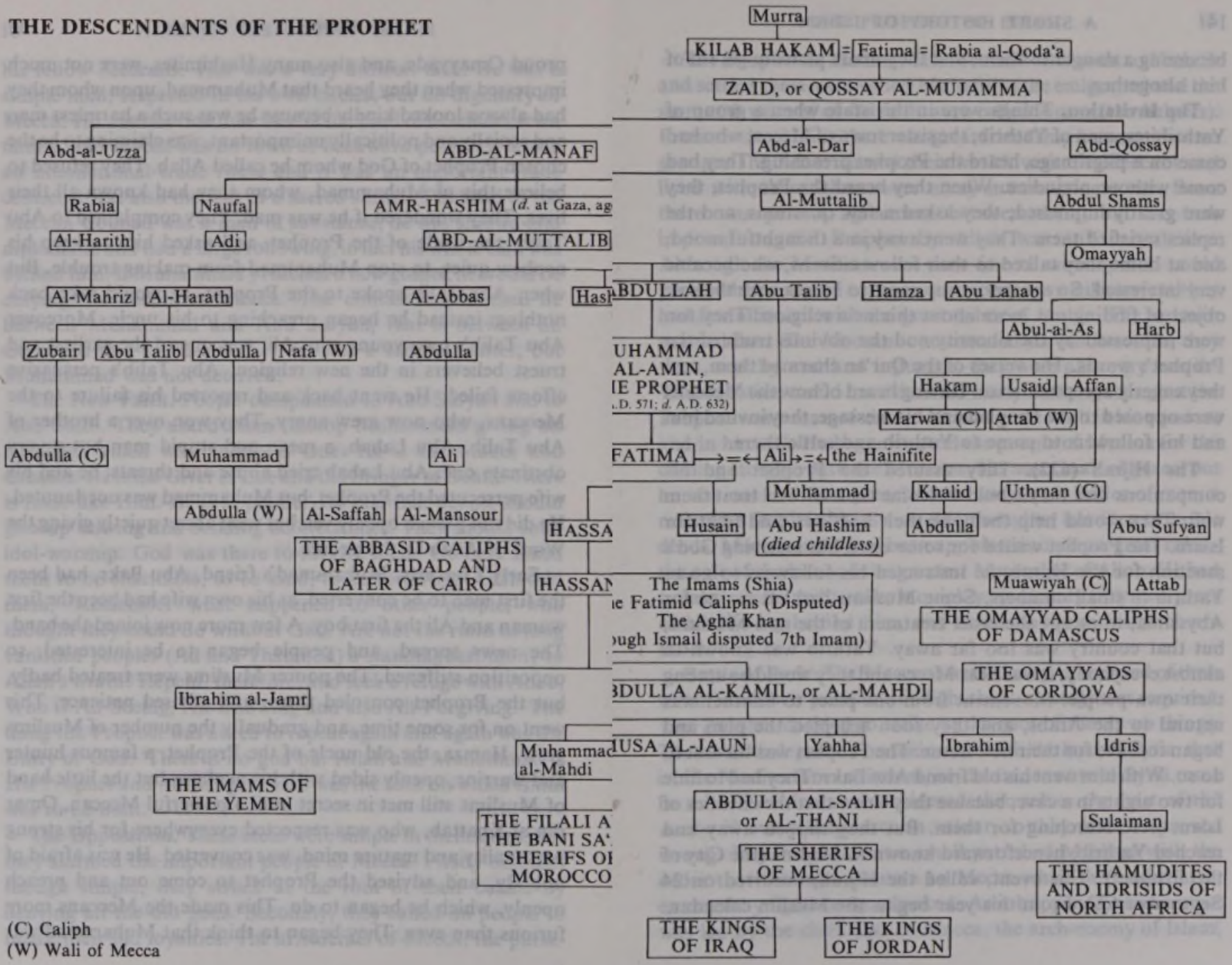
Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah. After that these messages continued fairly regularly. There were gaps and now the gaps worried the Prophet more than the messages. He was a very honest man, and did not want to deceive himself. He was, therefore, often disturbed, but his wife reassured him, and gradually he was convinced that the visions and voices were not imaginary. This went on for some time. As yet the Prophet had not been asked to start preaching the new gospel, he talked to a few intimates, but that was all. Three years later, however, came the revelation that he was now appointed as a *Rasul* (a messenger of Allah), and he was asked to give this message to his fellow Meccans. This was a very difficult task. He was a simple man, respected in his own circles, but no dignitary of Mecca. He was not rich, nor was he the head of a clan or even a family, and Mecca was no town of backward people; it lay on an international trade route and it was an important trade centre. It was also the seat of a sacred shrine. The head of the Meccan Council was a man of substance; he was shrewd and diplomatic and had a large following, in fact his whole clan was behind him. If Muhammad preached a new gospel, he would be defying the Elders of Mecca. The contest would then lie between Muhammad and Abu Sufyan, that is between an Omayyad and a Hashimite. This was a serious matter, but Muhammad was not deterred.

The New Faith. People complained to Abu Sufyan and to Abu Talib. They asked them to stop Muhammad giving his message, which was: 'Allah is One. He is the Maker and Creator. He is the Giver of Life and the Bringer of Death. There is none like Him. He is Supreme.' He said that people should give up bowing and bending before stones. They should shun idol-worship. God was there to forgive them. He only asked them to be charitable, to be kind, to be forgiving. Allah told them, 'Remember what happened to other people, who thought they could do without God. Are not the ruins of long vanished peoples (Ad and Thamood) a standing testimony to Allah's wrath? Repent, therefore, and seek a refuge with Allah, Who is All-Seeing, All-Knowing and also All-Forgiving!' The thing the Prophet was asked to repeat again and again was the Unity of God. 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet and Messenger.' This was the rock on which Islam was to be built.

The Opposition. These ideas were simple in themselves, but they alarmed the important people of Mecca. Firstly because, though simple, they struck at the root of their beliefs by denying all the old gods. Secondly, they called on people to break their old loyalties. The aristocrats of Mecca, the purseproud Omayyads, and also many Hashimites, were not much impressed when they heard that Muhammad, upon whom they had always looked kindly because he was such a harmless man and socially and politically unimportant, was claiming to be the chosen Prophet of God whom he called Allah. They refused to believe this of Muhammad, whom they had known all their lives. They wondered if he was mad. They complained to Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet, and asked him to keep his nephew quiet, to stop Muhammad from making trouble. But when Abu Talib spoke to the Prophet, he would take back nothing: instead he began preaching to his uncle. Moreover Abu Talib's own young son, Ali, was one of the earliest and truest believers in the new religion. Abu Talib's persuasive efforts failed. He went back and reported his failure to the Meccans, who now grew angry. They won over a brother of Abu Talib, Abu Lahab, a mean and stupid man but a very obstinate one. Abu Lahab tried abuse and threats; he and his wife persecuted the Prophet, but Muhammad was not daunted. He did not preach openly yet, but went about quietly giving the Word of Allah to the people.

Early Converts. Muhammad's friend, Abu Bakr, had been the first man to be converted, as his own wife had been the first woman and Ali the first boy. A few more now joined the band. The news spread, and people began to be interested, so opposition stiffened. The poorer Muslims were treated badly, but the Prophet consoled them, and advised patience. This went on for some time, and gradually the number of Muslims grew. Hamza, the old uncle of the Prophet, a famous hunter and warrior, openly sided with his nephew, but the little band of Muslims still met in secret until a powerful Meccan, Omar ibn al-Khattab, who was respected everywhere for his strong personality and mature mind, was converted. He was afraid of nobody, and advised the Prophet to come out and preach openly, which he began to do. This made the Meccans more furious than ever. They began to think that Muhammad was

THE DESCENDANTS OF THE PROPHET


Murra
KILAB HAKAM
Fatima
Rabia al-Qoda'a
ZAID, or QOSSAY AL-MUJAMMA
Abd-al-Uzza
ABD-AL-MANAF
Abd-al-Dar
Abd-Qossay
Rabia
Naufal
AMR-HASHIM (*d.* at Gaza, ag
Al-Muttalib
Abdul Shams
Al-Harith
Adi
ABD-AL-MUTTALIB
Omayyah
Al-Mahriz
Al-Harath
Al-Abbas
Hash
BDULLAH
Abu Talib
Hamza
Abu Lahab
Abul-al-As
Harb
Zubair
Abu Talib
Abdulla
Nafa (W)
Abdulla
UHAMMAD
AL-AMIN,
E PROPHET
.D. 571; *d.* A.D. 632)
Hakam
Usaid
Affan
Marwan (C)
Attab (W)
Abdulla (C)
Muhammad
Ali
FATIMA
Ali
the Hainifite
Muhammad
Khalid
Uthman (C)
Abdulla (W)
Al-Saffah
Al-Mansour
HASSA
Husain
Abu Hashim
(died childless)
Abdulla
Abu Sufyan
THE ABBASID CALIPHS
OF BAGHDAD AND
LATER OF CAIRO
HASSAN
The Imams (Shia)
e Fatimid Caliphs (Disputed)
The Agha Khan
ough Ismail disputed 7th Imam)
Muawiyah (C)
Attab
THE OMAYYAD CALIPHS
OF DAMASCUS
THE OMAYYADS
OF CORDOVA
BDULLA AL-KAMIL, or AL-MAHDI
Ibrahim al-Jamr
Muhammad
al-Mahdi
USA AL-JAUN
Yahha
Ibrahim
Idris
THE IMAMS OF
THE YEMEN
ABDULLA AL-SALIH
or AL-THANI
Sulaiman
THE FILALI A
THE BANI SA'
SHERIFS OI
MOROCCO
THE SHERIFS
OF MECCA
THE HAMUDITES
AND IDRISIDS OF
NORTH AFRICA
THE KINGS
OF IRAQ
THE KINGS
OF JORDAN

(C) Caliph
(W) Wali of Mecca

becoming a danger to them, and they made plans to get rid of him altogether.

The Invitation. Things were in this state when a group of Yathribites, men of Yathrib, the sister town of Mecca, who had come on a pilgrimage, heard the Prophet preaching. They had come without prejudice. When they heard the Prophet, they were greatly impressed; they asked a few questions, and the replies satisfied them. They went away in a thoughtful mood, and at home they talked to their fellow citizens, who became very interested. So another group came to Mecca with the sole object of finding out more about this new religion. They too were impressed by the sincerity and the obvious truth of the Prophet's words. The verses of the Qur'an charmed them, and they eagerly accepted Islam. Having heard of how the Meccans were opposed to the Prophet and his message, they invited him and his followers to come to Yathrib and settle there.

The Hijrah (622). They assured the Prophet and his companions that they would welcome them all and treat them well. They would help them, be their brothers, and fight for Islam. The Prophet waited for some time, but receiving God's sanction for the Hijrah, he instructed his followers to go to Yathrib in small numbers. Some Muslims had left earlier for Abyssinia, to escape the cruel treatment of the non-Muslims, but that country was too far away. Yathrib was known to almost everybody, it was near Mecca and they would be among their own people. Movement from one place to another was natural to the Arabs, and they soon accepted the plan and began to leave for their new home. The Prophet was the last to do so. With him went his old friend Abu Bakr. They had to hide for two nights in a cave, because they knew that the enemies of Islam were searching for them. But they slipped away and reached Yathrib, henceforward known as Medina (the City of the Prophet). This event, called the Hijrah, occurred on 24 September 622. From this year begins the Muslim calendar.

The Prophet in Medina. The Meccans who went to Yathrib and settled there were called Muhajirin (the emigrants) and the men and women of Yathrib were called Ansar (the helpers). From the beginning there was great friendship between the two groups. The Ansar shared their wealth with the Meccans and lived with them; there were many intermarriages too. Soon there was perfect agreement between them, but the task imposed on the Prophet by Allah was still very heavy. Although the Muslims were now free to worship and could preach their religion to others also, they were still too few; they had few alliances with the great tribes of Arabia. The bedouin roamed free. The Meccans commanded the trade routes; they were wealthy and had influence: they were also very hostile. This situation could have daunted many a strong man, but the Prophet was a man of vision. He had great faith in his mission, and in himself. He began to steel the people of Medina for the coming struggle with the Meccans. He was a man of peace, but he was not merely a preacher, he was also a leader of men, a man who inspired them to noble thoughts, but also to noble deeds. Moreover, he had been appointed to play a great role—the role of the last and the greatest Messenger of Allah. He had to take action and to take it quickly, as already fifty-two years of his life lay behind him, and man's days on this earth are short.

Battle of Badr. The Meccans were strong, and proud of their wealth and their position. To fight them, strategy was required. The Prophet decided to strike at the root of these two things. Their wealth depended on their trade with the land of Syria, that is, the Mediterranean littoral, so the trade route to Syria must be cut. The Meccans considered themselves the best of the Arabs in everything, even in valour, so they must be proved wrong. The Prophet sent a small patrol of Muslims with the order that the next caravan to Mecca which was, of course, escorted by fighters, be attacked. As it happened, the caravan was led by the chief man of Mecca, the arch-enemy of Islam, Abu Sufyan himself. Now Abu Sufyan was a clever man. He had a strong guard with him, but realizing the danger, he sent a swift messenger to Mecca for aid. Meanwhile the Muslims came up under the leadership of the Prophet. They were only about 300 strong, and the Meccans numbered 1,000. These are small numbers, but with these forces one of the decisive battles of the world was fought at Badr in A.D. 623, the second year of the Hijrah. The Muslims were inspired by faith, they never doubted for an instant that they would win. They swept the Meccans off the field. It was a great victory. Many prisoners were taken and much booty, but the Prophet showed great diplomacy and foresight; rejecting vengeful advice, he held the Meccans to ransom and treated them well.

Battle of Uhud (Jan. 625). The defeat at Badr was a blot on the honour of the Meccans of which they were greatly ashamed. So the next year they attacked Medina with a large force which numbered 3,000 fighters. The Muslims could only muster 700 armed men. The Prophet, realizing the seriousness of the occasion, gave strict instructions to his followers. He laid the plan of attack and defence, ordering them to keep to their positions unless told to move; but the inexperienced Muslims forgot all these instructions in the excitement of the battle. They began to fight without plan, and after beating back a flank of the Meccan army, fell on the Meccan camp without making sure that the enemy had been really defeated. The result was that the Meccan reserve, led by a brilliant commander, Khalid ibn al-Walid, came upon them suddenly and scattered them. The Prophet himself was wounded and he fell. A cry rose, 'The Prophet is slain.' This demoralized the Muslims further and many fled. The battle of Uhud ended in a defeat, and the Muslims of Medina were shamed before their Prophet. But the Prophet was no ordinary man; he gathered his men together, read them a lecture, rebuked them for their folly, exhorted them to obey orders in future, and led the chastened Medinites out to face the victorious Meccans once more. He came up with them in the early hours of the next morning. He pitched his camp in sight of them and ordered huge fires to be built. The idea was to show the Meccans that the Muslims had not lost heart. When the day dawned, the Meccans saw the Muslims in their rear going about their morning tasks utterly unafraid, and they were greatly impressed. The Prophet had turned the defeat into victory.

The Jews and Conquest of Islam. After this the Prophet never lost a battle and it was not long before nearly the whole of Arabia came under Muslim rule. After the Meccans, the first people to give trouble were the Jews in Medina and its neighbourhood. Not only did they openly scoff at the Prophet's teachings, but they conspired against the Muslims. They were a united people and rich. The Prophet had to organize a number of *ghazwahs* (holy wars) against them before they were subdued. Before this happened, however, the Jews and the Meccans, allying in a common cause, assembled a large army 10,000 strong and invaded Medina. The Prophet had to dig a ditch round Medina to protect the town. The Muslim resistance was so stubborn, however, that the enemy could not prevail, and withdrew. Now the Prophet turned on the Jews and taught them a severe lesson. The last time the Jews fought Islam was at Khaybar, where, though it was a Jewish stronghold, the Muslims won. It was in this battle that Ali, the young cousin of the Prophet, showed his valour. It was also after this battle that a Jewess, Zainab, put poisoned food before the Prophet, though the Prophet seemed to know at once and spat out the very first morsel. It is believed that the poison was so deadly that it went into his system even in that very short time.

The Pact of Hudaibiya (628). In A.H. 6, or A.D. 628, the Prophet took a large following of Muslims to Mecca for the Hajj or pilgrimage ceremony. The Meccans were no longer disposed to fight, but objected to such a large gathering, especially as many of the Muslims were also armed. This was not strange, as the Arabs were always armed, but the Meccans were alarmed. They refused to let such a large body enter the sacred boundaries. Negotiations were therefore set afoot. After much talk, the Meccans agreed to a truce. A pact was drawn up called the Pact of Hudaibiya. It has been considered a great diplomatic victory for the Prophet, because the Meccans were persuaded to agree to most of the terms of the Muslim leader. According to it, they agreed to the Prophet's right to preach and convert the Arabs to Islam, wherever they be. They agreed to allow the Prophet and his followers to enter Mecca on the occasion of the annual Hajj. The truce was to last ten years. Now that the restrictions on joining Islam were removed, the Arabs began to accept Islam in their thousands. One of the famous converts was Khalid ibn al-Walid, the future great general.

Conquest of Mecca (630). The Meccans then made a mistake. In A.D. 630 they attacked a tribe which was under Muslim protection, and thus broke the truce. The Prophet led a large army of Muslims (10,000 strong) towards Mecca. By now the tide had turned; the Meccans were not strong enough to fight such an army commanded by a general such as the Prophet had turned out to be, and they laid down their arms. Their leader, Abu Sufyan, accepted Islam. His son, Muawiyah, became one of the secretaries of the Prophet. Mecca, the heart of Arabia, now lay before the Prophet. The despised son of that ancient town had come back triumphant, but instead of being vindictive, this strange man was kindness itself. He acted in a way new to the Arabs: he forgave his enemies. He destroyed the idols which lay in the Kaaba, but the first thing he did in the Kaaba was to pray. He gave back the key of the sacred house to the hereditary keepers and told the people to come in peace to him. This conduct delighted the Meccans. They considered this *muruw'ah* (manly generosity) of the Prophet the height of nobility and came forward to enter this astonishing religion which returned enmity with love.

anarchy spread and there was chaos at the court for two years. It was only when the *Janissaries* were rounded up and killed in thousands that order was restored.

War with Russia—Treaty of Belgrade. The Turks soon had other troubles, this time with Catherine, the Czarina of Russia, but in the war with Russia (1736-1739) they had the advantage. France, an ally of the Sultan, asked him to protest to Russia against her designs in Poland. It would have been wiser for the Turks to have remained neutral for some time to recover their strength, but they were good fighters and felt that the Europeans had been unfair in their continuous alliances against them. Moreover Russia was being offensively aggressive. The Russians were anxious to have an outlet in the Black Sea and once more started hostilities against the Turks in Azov. Both the Crimea and the Volga Basin had for centuries been the homes of the Tartars, who were Muslims. At one time the Tartars were a power in Russia. In the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries the Grand Duchy of Moscow was not a strong state and had for long paid tribute to the Tartars. It was only after the reign of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century that Moscow had become independent. Ever since then the Russians had been pressing down on the Tartars. The Volga Basin had been lost to them, the Crimean Tartars had come under Turkish domination and it was the Sultan who fought the Russians in this region. So when the Russians attacked Azov again the Turks resisted strongly. Eugene of Savoy was now dead and the Turks found that they could defeat the Austrians easily in Eastern Europe. The war ended in the Treaty of Belgrade, by which the Turks got back Northern Serbia, Belgrade, and Azov.

The Derebays. The Turks were not, however, destined to enjoy peace even now. There was a great internal disturbance, this time in Asia Minor, where the descendants of military fief holders, now called the Lords of the Plains, or Derebays, began to set up small semi-independent principalities of their own, refusing to pay revenue or send levies to the Sultan when asked to do so. This was a recurring disease of the Muslim body politic. When the centre weakened, the outlying provinces or strong governors became independent till a new central power rose to weld all the parts into one empire again. The rule by one strong man never gave the people a chance to think collectively of a state to which they owed loyalty. The democratic idea that sovereignty rests in the people was unknown. The empire was strong when the Sultan was strong and weakened with weak rulers. Wars with Persia, which extended over centuries, sapped the strength both of Turkey and of Persia. These wars were the result of ancient rivalries between Tartars and Persians or differences between Sunnis and Shiites, but the result was that neither country benefited by these wars; they exhausted both.

Catherine of Russia. The Europeans became involved in two wars at this time, the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years War. These wars were bitterly fought, and gave Turkey a chance to recover. Fortunately, she had a capable Sultan, Mustafa III and a very capable Grand Vizier, Raghib Pasha. Raghib Pasha made strenuous efforts during his vizierate, which lasted seven years (1757-1763), to improve the finances of the Empire, and to reorganize the army; he also had time to subdue the Derebays who had created unrest in Anatolia. This peace, however, did not last long. It was disturbed by the Russians and their terrible Czarina, Catherine the Great. She began by invading Poland. The Poles fought back, but were outmatched and defeated again and again. Many of them fled into the Turkish Empire and in pursuing the Poles the Russians raided the Turkish borders. The Sultan hesitated to go to war as he was not yet strong enough, but France now prevailed upon the Sultan to commit a major political blunder; to declare war on Russia. The Czarina acted as if she was waiting only for this chance. She moved her armies into Moldavia and Wallachia. She then sent her fleet, in which she had many British officers, from the Baltic to the Aegean. The Turkish navy was no match for such a fleet, and in the Battle of Chesme, in 1770, the Turkish fleet was defeated. The Russians capped this by conquering the Crimea, and continued to move farther into the Turkish Empire. They would not have stopped, but a revolt occurred in Russia in 1773 called the Revolt of Pugachev. This made the Czarina call a halt to her armies and the treaty, which was signed at Kuchuk Kainarji (1774), was in Russia's favour. By it, Turkey lost the districts of Kinburn, Yenikale, and Kertch in the Crimea. The Tartars of the Crimea were encouraged to become independent though they were told that they could still continue to revere the Sultan as a Caliph. Moldavia and Wallachia were returned to Turkey, but Russia was accepted as the Protector of the Christians in Eastern Europe. She insisted that she should be permitted to build a church in Galata, the part of Istanbul where the Christians lived.

Alliance of Austria and Russia (1781). There was now a new understanding between Russia and Austria. They agreed to do all in their power to drive the Turks out of Eastern Europe, to restore the medieval Greek Empire of Byzantium and, when liberated, the Greeks were to have as their Emperor Catherine's own grandson, Constantine. The Austrians were to have the western half of the Balkans. Working on this understanding, Catherine annexed the whole of the Crimea in 1783, but was still not satisfied and conquered Georgia in the Caucasus too. When Turkey rose to defend her frontiers, Austria joined Russia. The Russian generals Potemkin and Suvarov marched into Moldavia and Wallachia and annexed them. The Turks were not yet fully recovered after their recent wars and their internal troubles over the Derebays, and the Russians easily fought their way to the Danube. The Turks fought well but with little success. They no longer had the strength to fight the Russian army successfully. At last, in 1791, Prussia, fearing again that Russia would become too powerful in Eastern

Europe if unchecked, moved Austria to stop the war, and the Treaty of Sistova was signed. Turkey was now at the mercy of the European powers, but because of mutual jealousies among them she had a better deal than she expected. Belgrade was given back to Turkey in return for a portion of Bosnia which Austria accepted. A year later (1792) Russia was persuaded to sign the Treaty of Jassy. As a result of these negotiations, Russia took Oczakov in the Crimea and returned Moldavia, Bessarabia, and Wallachia to Turkey. The river Dneister was declared to be the boundary. This was the position at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Turkish Government—The Sultan-Caliph. The administrative structure of the empire must now be considered, and the achievements of the Turks in the two hundred years of their history discussed in this chapter must be determined. The Sultan was by now known also as the Caliph of Islam and was, as such, the religious head of the Muslims, although not of all Muslims. Originally the Osmanlis were merely chieftains. Orkhan had called himself Amir and it was Bayazid I who had chosen to be called Sultan. Muhammad Fatih was styled Sultan of the Worlds (*Sultan ul-Barrain wal-Bahrain*). It was only after Selim I had conquered Egypt that the mantle of the Prophet, hitherto worn by both the lines of the Abbasid Caliphs, came to Constantinople. But the actual Caliphate was assumed by the Sultans only in the eighteenth century when they found their power going and their hold on the people weakening. The Persians never acknowledged them as such, as they believed that the Caliphate could only descend through the House of Ali; the Indian Muslims were followers by courtesy only.

Organization of the Empire. The Sultan-Caliph, being the supreme, temporal and spiritual head of the empire, delegated many of his powers to others. As early as the days of Muhammad II, the *Qanunnama* laid down the duties and responsibilities of the higher officials of the state. The Grand Vizier came to be the *Naib* or the Deputy of the Sultan. In the days of the weaker sultans he was the head of the state. The Grand Vizier had sessions with the heads of departments almost every day. This council of his functioned very much as a cabinet functions today, with the difference that the ministers were appointed by the Sultan and were responsible to him and were not the representatives of the people as is the system in most of the democratic countries today. The empire was divided into three viceroyalties; Rumelia, Anadolu, and Africa, which were, as in the days of the earlier Ottomans, under the command of the Beylerbeys.

The Civil Service. The Shariah prevailed in the country, though from the beginning the Osmanlis had their own common law. The Turks trained their civil servants very carefully and had a systematic course of instruction for them extending over years. There were thousands of students attending such schools, and the first course lasted seven years. A successful candidate was called *Danishmand*. He could now join any profession he liked: he could be a teacher or a magistrate, but, if he wanted to become a Junior Mullah, he had to take the advanced course, which lasted another seven years. For higher posts there was always an interview, and even higher standards.

Religious Orders. Religious life was well organized too. In few Muslim countries have the religious orders had such popularity as in Turkey. Three or four orders especially were very powerful. They were purely spiritual in character and did not at first interfere in politics. The three orders most popular were, first the Mevleviya Order, established by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, the famous mystic poet. This order came to have a ritual of dancing in ecstasy; its followers were called the 'dancing *dervishes*'. The second order was the Bektashiya Order which had some common features with both the

Christians and the Shiites. The Bektashis did not believe in formal worship and their mystics did not always follow the ritual of Islam. This order found great favour among the *Janissaries*. The third order was the Naqshbandiya Order of which something has been said earlier. This order made a great impression in India in the sixteenth century and gave rise to such great persons as Mujadad Alf Sani and Shah Wali-Ullah. Gradually the religious orders in Turkey began to get worldly, and the heads of the orders began to acquire property and become corrupt. Thus the orders which in the beginning helped to give guidance to the social and moral life of the Turks contributed in the end to their decline and downfall.

Turkish Culture. Turkish traditions have mostly been military and the Turks have always been a practical people. They were good builders, good law-givers, and good organizers. Politically they organized their society on the *millat* system, under which they interfered very little in the cultural, social, or religious life of the many communities in their empire. They gave them all, whether Bulgars, Serbs, Armenians, or Druses, their own laws. If the Turks had moved with the times they would have kept their empire together for this reason alone. In literary culture they followed Arabic and Persian patterns, mostly Persian. Arabic dominated their law and Persian their literature for centuries. Gradually their own forms began to emerge. They were encouraged in this by far-sighted Sultans. At first all Turkish poetry was written in the form and style of Persian poetry and it took the Turks a long time to break with this tradition. In prose they formed a new style fairly early. In 1679 Evliya Chelebi wrote his *Chronicles of a Traveller*. It was an original work, based on his travels and campaigns in Europe. In it he gives a good description of the social and economic conditions of the empire. The finest poem was one written by Shaikh Ghalib (1757-1790), called *Husn-o-Ishq* (Beauty and Love). It is an allegory of divine love and was written by the then head of the Mevleviya Order. Among historians of this period the chief names are those of Sa'duddin, who wrote *Taqut-i-Twarikh*, 'Crown of Histories', in the seventeenth century, and Naima who wrote his *Tarikh* in many volumes.

CHAPTER 12

THE MOGHULS IN INDIA

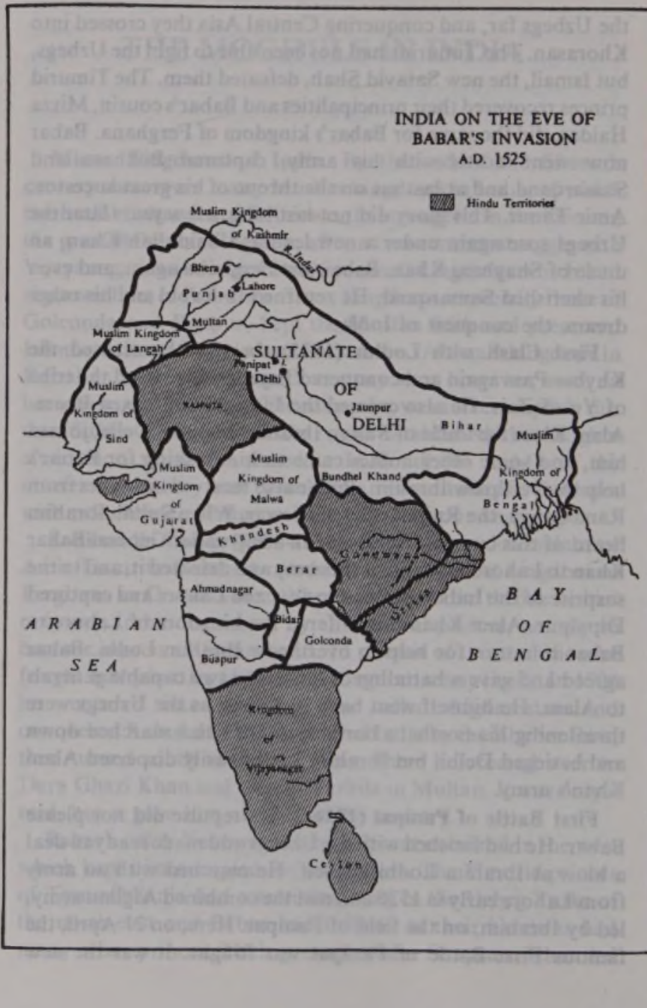
Minor Kingdoms of India. By the end of the fifteenth century there were many Muslim kingdoms in India, of which the Lodhi Sultanate of Delhi was the strongest. In the Deccan, the great Bahmani kingdom, after a two-century struggle with Vijayanagar, was divided into five small kingdoms which had vigorous lives of their own. These kingdoms, especially those of Golconda and Bijapur, kept the Muslim faith and preserved Islamic culture for two centuries more. A small kingdom in Kabul early in the sixteenth century was, however, soon to become a great empire. The man who was to accomplish this was Sultan Zahiruddin Babar who established the Moghul civilization which flourished in India till the middle of the nineteenth century and is seeking a revival today in Pakistan with new Western influences lending it vigour and scope.

Zahiruddin Babar (1482-1530). Babar was a descendant of Amir Timur and had inherited the small Timurid kingdom of Ferghana in Central Asia. When he came to the throne he had only one ambition, shared by all Timurid princes, namely to become master of Samarqand. In pursuit of this ambition he fought many battles and lost his kingdom many times. In 1504 he ventured into what is now called Afghanistan and conquered Kabul. In 1505 he entered India by the Khyber Pass, then turned south to Kohat. From there he crossed over to Dera Ghazi Khan and then to Tarbila in Multan. It was only a raid, but it gave him an idea of the country.

Babar's other Ventures. Then an event occurred in the west which kept him occupied for some years. The Timurid princes of Trans-Oxiania had a terrible enemy in the Uzbeg Turks of the north-east and Babar had suffered at their hands as had many other princes. Their present leader Shaybani Khan led the Uzbegs far, and conquering Central Asia they crossed into Khorasan. The Timurids had not been able to fight the Uzbegs, but Ismail, the new Safavid Shah, defeated them. The Timurid princes recovered their principalities and Babar's cousin, Mirza Haidar, did the same for Babar's kingdom of Ferghana. Babar now went north with his army, captured Bokhara and Samarqand and at last sat on the throne of his great ancestor, Amir Timur. This glory did not last long; a few years later the Uzbegs rose again under a new leader, Ubaidullah Khan, an uncle of Shaybani Khan. Babar lost Ferghana again, and even his cherished Samarqand. He returned to Kabul and his other dream, the conquest of India.

First Clash with Lodhis (1523). In 1519 he crossed the Khyber Pass again and conquered Bajaur where lived the tribe of Yusuf Zais. He also crossed the Indus and annexed Bhera. Alam Khan the uncle of Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi of Delhi, joined him, and some other nobles came to him, asking for Babar's help to overthrow Ibrahim. Babar also received messages from Rana Sanga, the Rajput ruler of Mewar. When Sultan Ibrahim heard of this conspiracy he sent an army under General Bahar Khan to Lahore. Babar met the army and defeated it, and to the surprise of the Indian princes he annexed Lahore and captured Dipalpur. Alam Khan now offered the kingdom of Lahore to Babar in return for help to overthrow Ibrahim Lodhi. Babar agreed and gave a battalion of horse and two capable generals to Alam. He himself went back to Kabul, as the Uzbegs were threatening his northern borders. Alam Khan marched down and besieged Delhi, but Ibrahim Lodhi easily dispersed Alam Khan's army.

First Battle of Panipat (1526). This repulse did not please Babar. He had finished with the Uzbegs and made ready to deal a blow at Ibrahim Lodhi himself. He marched with an army from Lahore early in 1526 and met the combined Afghan army, led by Ibrahim, on the field of Panipat. Here, on 21 April, the famous First Battle of Panipat was fought. It was the new



INDIA ON THE EVE OF BABAR'S INVASION A.D. 1525

▨ Hindu Territories
Muslim Kingdom of Kashmir
R. Indus
Bhera
Lahore
Punjab
Multan
Muslim Kingdom of Langah
SULTANATE OF DELHI
Panipat
Delhi
Jaunpur
Bihar
RAJPUTS
Muslim Kingdom of Sind
Muslim Kingdom of Gujarat
Muslim Kingdom of Malwa
Bundhel Khand
Muslim Kingdom of Bengal
Khandesh
Berar
Gondwana
Orissa
Ahmadnagar
Bidar
Golconda
Bijapur
ARABIAN SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
Kingdom of Vijayanagar
Ceylon